



"Working together to keep our neighborhood
a nice place to come home to."

FOR MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEMBERS

July 6, 2009

Stephanie,

We would like to thank you and the other representatives from the City of Austin Watershed Department and Parks Department for attending two of our neighborhood association meetings and providing us information pertaining to Phase II of the Stormwater Upgrade in Rosedale and information about using Ramsey Park as a staging area for this project.

The Rosedale Neighborhood Association has made several efforts to distribute this information to all Rosedale residents. Included with this letter are two attachments showing the information that we have distributed. Both attachments were posted on the Rosedale listserv, and the first attachment was also printed in our newsletter, which is both hand delivered to each residence and posted on our neighborhood website. We have also had two meetings at which you were in attendance where most of this information was discussed. Our efforts to inform the neighborhood have focused on Rosedale residents. We have not had any discussions with the businesses in Rosedale.

We recognize that locating the staging area at Ramsey Park will have a huge impact on the Rosedale neighborhood since the park is heavily used by Rosedale residents. We know also that Ramsey Park is a destination park for many individuals and groups from outside Rosedale. Consequently, we consider this matter to be of major importance to Rosedale.

After listening to many comments, we are of the opinion that most residents, while regretting the negative impact of locating the staging area in the park, agree that the project should proceed as planned and that Ramsey Park can be used as the staging area for the project. Most residents see, first and foremost, the need to address flooding problems as soon as possible. Those problems are real. To prevent the flooding of residences, yards, and streets in the event of heavy rains, the project should not be delayed. In addition, most residents are willing to agree to the use of Ramsey Park as the staging area because that use will result in mitigation funds to be used for improvements at the park. Upgrades and repairs for Ramsey Park, the focal point of our neighborhood, are much needed. The mitigation funds are likely exceed \$200,000 according to City Park representatives who were present at the two neighborhood meetings, which is an amount that creates a strong incentive leading most residents to agree to the staging area.

We acknowledge that a small number of residents and park users oppose the staging area being located at Ramsey Park. Their concerns relate primarily to the noise and dust that would be created at the staging area, to the movement of construction equipment in front of or near their homes, and to the loss of the baseball field for the length of the project. Without diminishing the merit of their concerns, we have concluded that the benefits of the project and the use of the park for the staging area greatly outweigh the negative effects. We believe that a large majority of Rosedale residents and certainly a majority of those who have contacted the neighborhood association feel that the flooding problems in the neighborhood should be addressed soon and that the mitigation funds will provide improvements to the park's infrastructure that otherwise might not ever be accomplished. For these reasons, many Rosedale residents are willing to allow our beloved park to be used as the staging area.

Thus, we as the Steering Committee for the Rosedale Neighborhood Association, on behalf our neighborhood, agree that the City of Austin Watershed Department should move forward with the preparations to use the northeast corner of Ramsey Park for a staging area for the Phase II Stormwater Drain Upgrade. However, we would like to limit this approval to Phase II only if it is put on the fast track to begin in 2010. If for some reason Phase II is not put on the fast track and is delayed until 2012, Rosedale would like to revisit the staging area decision at that time. The approval to use Ramsey Park is also dependent on the requirement that the City of Austin use the mitigation money from the staging area fund to make improvements at Ramsey Park. At the appropriate time, the RNA will conduct a survey among residents to determine the priority of improvements for our park.

Our approval is contingent on the City or the contractor returning the staging area to its original or better condition on completion of the project. That would include:

- All road base or foreign materials brought in for the staging should be removed, the compacted soil should be aerated, and appropriate soil should be brought in to provide a level field
- All damaged curbs and sidewalks should be repaired or replaced
- The current outfield fence, because of removal or alteration due to access to the staging area, should be replaced, including fence posts and fencing materials.

Also, one of the concerns mentioned regarding any staging area is the amount of dust it would create. In that regards, we have two suggestions:

- The City or contractor should explore the possibility of an overhead automatic water sprinkler that could be activated when the movement of equipment or materials would stir up a large amount of dust or particulates.
- We understand that the fencing around the staging area is covered with some kind of barrier fabric. If possible, that fabric should be of a quality that helps to prevent the spread of dust. .

And, two new issues that were not brought up at the meeting are:

- Concern about the number of worker vehicles that would be located around the staging area. We request a limit on this number of worker vehicles around the staging area as that area is already congested from commercial parking by businesses located in the 4200 and 4300 blocks of Burnet Road. In addition, we request that worker vehicles not be parked in front of residences.
- The need for a contact person at the City who could be contacted by residents with questions or concerns if they arise. Also, it would be helpful if that person would post occasional messages to our listserv about the progress of the project.

Thank you again for all of your help with this project.

Joyce and Mark Brown
Kim and Richard Relph
Co-Presidents, Rosedale Neighborhood Association

Hello Neighbors,

One of our neighbors recently referred to Ramsey Park as the “crown jewel” of the neighborhood. What a great way to describe our beloved Ramsey Park. Rosedale neighbors and the Rosedale Neighborhood Association (RNA) have over the years achieved success in maintaining our park as the focal point of Rosedale. Before we try and answer many of the questions asked about the staging area for the Phase II Stormwater Drainage Improvement Project, we’d like to provide a little bit of background about Ramsey Park for our new neighbors.

Ramsey Park has always been the “heart” of the Rosedale Neighborhood. We personally have read newspaper accounts from the 1940s and 1950s, before air conditioning and TV, describing neighborhood dances, picnics, children’s plays, and pot luck suppers being held at Ramsey Park. In recent history, the RNA and Rosedale neighbors have energetically worked and campaigned for updates and improvements to the park that is still the “heart” of our neighborhood. These include:

- Working with the city to negotiate funding for a new pool after the old pool was closed by the city during a period of water rationing since the old pool had multiple leaks and did not have a filtration system. The city closed the pool and did not have plans in place to reopen it. RNA and Rosedale neighbors worked tirelessly until the city agreed to fund a new pool. We won a new pool but, unfortunately, two other improvements that the neighborhood wanted and that the city agreed were necessary weren’t made due to a lack of funds in the budget. A sprinkler system for the grass within the pool area (to keep dirt and grass out of the pool) and new restrooms would have to wait.
- Sponsoring two fundraising campaigns for funds to purchase and erect both the toddler and children’s playscapes.
- Joining with TreeFolks to sponsor a tree planting. Many neighbors volunteered for this beautification project to replace some of Ramsey Park’s aging trees.
- Hosting an Eagle Scout project in which the Eagle candidate organized fundraisers and work crews to plant trees and install the picnic tables and benches around and in the pool area. Another Rosedale Eagle scout candidate organized the fundraising and volunteers to complete a renovation of the bleachers and backstop netting for the softball field.
- Working to finalize completion of the sidewalk around the entire park. RNA and Traffic Calming Committee members worked many hours with the city council and city staff to find funding through the Parks Foundation funds, the Austin City Limits Park Fees, generous donations of many Rosedale neighbors, and money raised at prior July 4th carnivals. The sidewalk is now in place!
- Organizing the July 4th annual carnivals in conjunction with the July 4th activities. The money raised at the carnivals is designated to be spent on Ramsey Park. Most recently, these funds were used for tree planting and toward the funding of the sidewalk completion.

Now, here are recent questions and answers about designating a staging area for the Rosedale Phase II Stormwater Drainage Improvement Project:

What about using a privately owned vacant lot for the staging area instead of Ramsey Park?

Different lots have been identified but each is too small. One acre is the minimum area needed for safe staging. Typical Rosedale lots are between one-eighth and one-sixth of an acre. There is no other site large enough and close enough. Also, the city has a policy that it will use an area only once for staging, so some locations that have been used recently as staging areas for other projects have been ruled out.

What will be inaccessible at the park if the staging area is located there?

All areas and everything in the park will be safely accessible during the staging except for the outfield area of the softball field. The staging area will be fenced and the fencing will be woven or covered with fabric.

What about the softball, soccer, and other field games?

The field will be unavailable for use for the duration of the project, which is estimated to be 15 months. That's a huge loss for the neighborhood. In exchange for loss of the field, mitigation funds in an amount estimated to exceed \$200,000 will be made available for improvements to Ramsey Park. It appears that, for most people, whether they can accept the loss of the ball field during the project depends on whether they think receiving the mitigation funds for Ramsey Park improvements is a good trade-off for losing the field during the project.

In conversations with several members of softball teams that use the ball field, we were told that some teams are willing to relocate temporarily to other nearby fields during the construction process, and they want to be included in the later discussions about setting priorities for the mitigation funds. Their recommendation is to spend part of the mitigation funds to improve the ball field, including the infield and outfield. Some other softball teams are opposed to the staging being at Ramsey Park. In their eyes, the loss of the field during the project would not be offset by any improvements that might be made later.

Will the sidewalk be available during the construction?

The sidewalk at the northeast corner of the park and along the 4300 block of Burnet Road will probably be closed for safety reasons during the staging period.

Will there be a vote by the entire neighborhood and how is the city collecting information about the wishes of the Rosedale neighbors?

The city sponsors a voting process when a project will permanently change the neighborhood, such as the traffic calming project. In the case of a staging area, a vote will not be held since the staging is a temporary use of a park that is owned by the City of

Austin. The city staff has the authority to use the park as a staging area but has generously approached the RNA to distribute information about the use of the park as a staging area and to collect feedback from neighbors about what can be done to make this whole process run as smoothly as possible.

The city could plan the staging area without input from Rosedale residents but it has chosen to work in cooperation with the neighbors. During the process to designate a staging area, all neighbors are free, of course, to voice their opinions.

The RNA has sponsored two neighborhood meetings at which the city representatives were present and held discussions with neighbors who attended. The information describing the plans for using the park as a staging area has been posted on the listserv and was also printed in a newsletter that was hand delivered to residences. That newsletter is now posted on the RNA website. We gathered opinions from the listserv and meetings. What we have found so far is that a few people are opposed to establishing the staging area in Ramsey Park. However, most people making a comment feel that, although they regret the adverse impact the staging area will have on the park and residents, they believe that Ramsey Park and Rosedale residents would greatly benefit by the park improvements that would be financed with the mitigation funds. Many residents have said that they love the park and use it heavily and that the mitigation money could pay for improvements that otherwise might never be accomplished.

If Ramsey Park is used as the staging area, all residents would be given an opportunity at a later date to participate in setting the priorities for park improvements.

What would happen if Rosedale residents chose to strongly oppose using Ramsey Park as a staging area?

This question was asked at the last meeting. The city feels like it has exhausted the search for alternative staging areas, so the city staff would review their findings and then in all probability would abandon the Rosedale Phase II Stormwater Drain Project for the near term and, perhaps, for a very long while.

We have to give some thought to whether the following comments have merit: It is very difficult to think about flooding in the middle of a drought. However, the flooding problem in Rosedale is real and needs to be addressed as quickly as possible. During heavy rains before the drought, several homes flooded, some yards and streets were full of water, and a few street storm drain covers were pushed off by the flow of the water. If sufficient opposition to the staging area develops, the city might abandon Phase II in Rosedale for years, which would deny relief to the residents who face the possibility of flooding each time heavy rains fall. Many other neighborhoods in Austin are waiting for their flood control phases to be addressed. If Rosedale neighbors cause the city to abandon this project, we have been told by the city staff that our flood-control measures would probably go to the bottom of the priority list and Phase II would be delayed for many years. Phase I of this project has been completed and was a success in eliminating the flooding of identified residences.

How would the mitigation funds, which are estimated to exceed \$200,000, to be used if Ramsey Park is used as the staging area?

Everyone in Rosedale and others who use Ramsey Park will be affected by the location of the staging area in the park. We especially acknowledge the negative effects that will be felt by the neighbors nearest to the park. However, the question becomes whether you accept the proposed trade-off. In other words, do you not think it is an acceptable trade-off to lose the use of the baseball outfield for 15 months in return for over \$200,000 in mitigation money designated for improving Ramsey Park and the completion of a project that is designed to alleviate flooding in parts of Rosedale. Many improvements could be made to the park with the mitigation money. Many possible improvements have already been suggested by neighbors, including some of those neighbors who would be most affected by the staging area. At the RNA meetings, the Parks Department seems to be excited about having money to spend on Ramsey Park. The Parks Department is well aware of how much Rosedale neighbors love Ramsey Park, and they know it is highly unlikely that the city budget will provide funds for improving the park anytime in the near future. The city staff realizes that many of the improvements and updates that are being suggested for Ramsey Park could be funded with this money.

Thank you to all Rosedale neighbors! You all have always been generous with your time, your donations, your suggestions and your opinions. Everyone is always working hard to make our neighborhood and our park a special place.

Please respond with any other questions or comments because we will soon have to provide a consensus summation of those comments to the city. All information will be posted on the listserv.

MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT FOR ROSEDALE

The City of Austin will undertake a major infrastructure project in Rosedale in the near future. The Rosedale Neighborhood Association (RNA) wants all residents and businesses in the area to be fully aware of the planned construction. We are very fortunate to have this major flood control and water quality project designed, funded, and built this quickly by the City of Austin. Many Austin neighborhoods experiencing these same problems are still waiting for their turn to have their problems addressed in a comprehensive plan. But, the construction means some inconvenience and frustration for a while and it possibly could limit our use of one part of Ramsey Park for the duration of project. The details are set out below.

REASON FOR THE INFRASTRUCTURE CONSTRUCTION--FLOOD CONTROL.

In 2005, the City of Austin developed a comprehensive plan to upgrade the outdated and inadequate storm water and drainage infrastructure in Rosedale. Many homes in Rosedale had experienced flooding and many streets and yards also flooded because the storm drains were inadequate. The whole plan was designed and scheduled to be implemented in two phases.

PHASE 1 CONSTRUCTION COMPLETED. Phase I of this upgrade was completed in 2007. In Phase I, the old inadequate storm drains were replaced with new larger storm drain pipes. Since streets had to be excavated, old water and waste water pipes were also replaced and streets were repaved. Phase I was a success. Since completion of Phase I, no home that previously had been susceptible to flooding in the Phase I area has flooded again. Residents who lived on the streets involved in Phase I weathered the inconvenience of having their streets disrupted with the construction of this new infrastructure.

PHASE 2 CONSTRUCTION COMING IN NEAR FUTURE. At the end of Phase I, the City of Austin told Rosedale residents that additional infrastructure replacement would be necessary to alleviate flooding in other parts of the neighborhood. The additional construction, Phase 2, will be funded with bond money and was originally scheduled to begin in October of 2012. However, at the RNA monthly meeting on Monday, May 18th, Stephanie Lott from the City of Austin along with other city department representatives presented information about Phase 2 and informed us that the project may be fast-tracked and could begin in March of 2010, less than a year from now. Because contractors are in need of work during the current economic conditions, they have contacted the City with offers to begin projects at a reduced cost sooner than originally planned. The City will be using reserved bond money for this project, so the city's current economic shortfalls are not involved. The construction will directly affect about 16 city blocks in Rosedale.

MAP SHOWING THE LOCATION OF PHASE 2 CONSTRUCTION. To view the areas affected by Phase 2, you can link to city information and maps at http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/watershed/flood_rosedale.htm

AMOUNT OF TIME NEEDED TO COMPLETE PHASE 2. Phase 2 will take approximately 15 months to complete. The construction will be undertaken in parts and, as a general matter, will begin downstream in the drainage system (that is, at the southern part of the neighborhood) and move upstream (northward).

HOURS OF CONSTRUCTION; NOTICE OF DISRUPTIONS. The normal working hours for the project will be weekdays 7am to 7pm, but the city officials will consider changes if problems are brought to their attention by the neighborhood. Workers will notify affected residents of disruptions that will affect their property, such as intersection closings and water shut-offs, by personally knocking on doors or leaving notices if no one is home.

STAGING AREA—RAMSEY PARK A POSSIBILITY. City officials have informed the RNA that they are currently looking for space that is approximately one acre in size to serve as the staging area for the project. They have identified the northeast corner of Ramsey Park (the outfield area of the baseball field) as the preferred staging area. Other areas were considered, but each of those areas has serious drawbacks and probably would not be acceptable. The other areas considered were: Texas Department of Transportation property at 45th Street and Bull Creek Road; open space at the State Records Center Building at 4400 Shoal Creek Blvd; and open space at the Triangle development. There are pros and cons to consider in regard to Ramsey Park serving as the staging area. Also, any damage done to the staging area, wherever it may be, will be repaired to equal or better condition by the contractors at the conclusion of the project.

MONEY FOR RAMSEY PARK IF THE PARK IS USED AS STAGING AREA. If the northeast corner of Ramsey Park is used as the staging area, mitigation fees would be paid, and the city would dedicate that money to financing various improvements to Ramsey Park. The city representatives estimate that the total amount of the fees would be about \$200,000. If Ramsey Park is used for the staging area, the neighborhood will have the opportunity to work with the area parks manager to select the park improvements, and the RNA would seek neighborhood input about what kind of park improvements would be most beneficial to the neighborhood and about setting priorities for those improvements. A few ideas that have been mentioned in the past are: a landscape irrigation system around the pool; renovation of the restrooms at the pool; creation of sidewalk areas specifically for use by children bicyclists and tricyclists; tennis court resurfacing; and pavilion improvements.

FURTHER DISCUSSION WITH CITY AT THE RNA'S JUNE MEETING. The City representatives will return to the next RNA meeting on Monday, June 22, for further discussions. The meeting will be at 6:45 at the Yarborough Public Library on Hancock Dr.

FUTURE POSTINGS ABOUT THE PROJECT. More information will be posted as we receive it.